

**City of Belmont
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING SEPTEMBER 5, 2012
MINUTES**

The regular meeting of the Belmont Parks & Recreation Commission of September 5, 2012 was called to order at 7:02 p.m. at the Belmont City Hall Council Chambers.

I. ROLL CALL

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Kevin Sullivan, Vice Chair Wright, Commissioner (C) Block, Eric Sullivan, Cheechov, Bortoli and Youth Commissioner (YC) Bartee. C Wong arrived shortly after roll call.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: YC Zakeri

STAFF PRESENT: Parks and Recreation Director (PRD) Gervais, Community Development Director (CDD) De Melo, Recreation Manager (RM) Brunson and Secretary (S) Saggau

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 6, 2012

C Wright moved, seconded by C Cheechov to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of June 6, 2012.

Vote: In Favor: Wright, Cheechov, Block, Eric Sullivan & Bartee
 Abstain: Kevin Sullivan & Bortoli

August 1, 2012

C Eric Sullivan moved, seconded by C Bortoli, to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of August 1, 2012.

Vote: In Favor: Eric Sullivan, Bortoli, Block, Bartee, Kevin Sullivan & Bortoli
 Abstain: Cheechov

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION/COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

C Eric Sullivan reported that C Wong, Block and he met at Barrett Community Center to survey the site and discuss ideas. C Sullivan said their discussions focused more on improvements that could be made to enhance the park environment instead of the buildings. Ideas included adding a walking path, improving the Ralston Avenue side of the park, greater development in the playground area and landscaping improvements. He noted they would like to see a long term

grand plan for Barrett but would like to see what can be completed at the facility with a smaller budget.

C Wong arrived at 7:10 p.m.

C Sullivan added he has had conversations with Matthew English, the president of School-Force, and they discussed the possibility of having School Force assist with the Parks & Recreation survey.

PRD Gervais announced the Cipriani Dog Park improvement project has been completed and the park is now open. A Re-Opening Celebration is being planned for Friday September 21, 2012 at 6:00 p.m.

PRD Gervais stated that AYSO would hold their Opening Day Ceremonies on Saturday, September 8, 2012 at the Sports Complex.

IV. AGENDA AMENDMENTS

None.

V. OLD BUSINESS

a. Belmont General Plan Update

PRD Gervais introduced CDD Carlos De Melo who explained the General Plan Document and the importance of updating the plan. A couple elements of Belmont's General Plan, Land Use and Circulation were completed in 1982. The Noise and Parks & Recreation & Open Space elements were completed in the 1990's. Housing elements must be completed every 5-7 years and Belmont's was updated a couple years ago.

CDD De Melo said the two key elements that the City will be working on are the Land Use and Circulation elements. The process started earlier this year and it was brought to the Park & Recreation Commission as there is a plan to create a focus group. This group would include one Parks & Recreation Commissioner, one Planning Commissioner, one Finance Commissioner and one City Council member to meet with staff to work on drafting the policy.

PRD Gervais added the Parks & Open Space element will define the broad values and ideas for parks and open space and recreation. He noted this will tier down to the Parks & Recreation Master Plan which describes what needs to be done.

CDD De Melo responded to questions from the Commission.

CC Kevin Sullivan stated he was glad this topic was on the agenda so the people become aware that there will be update to the General Plan. CDD De Melo added that although the focus group will work on the policies it will be brought to the public for feedback.

b. Belmont Sports Complex Synthetic Turf Project Update

PRD Gervais reviewed the background for the project. He presented an aerial photo of the Sports Complex site to provide a visual of the location of these fields. PRD Gervais noted the needs for the project which include the maintenance issues, increased demand for field time, environmental concerns, and economics.

PRD Gervais stated the City Council approved funds to start designing this project. A consultant was selected to start the design. This project includes installation of synthetic turf of the North and South fields. This will require rebuilding the drainage, laying a new sub-base, installing infill material and laying carpet.

PRD Gervais said that Callander and Associates created eleven designs for this project. After numerous meetings three preferred alternatives were selected. Soccer and baseball groups prefer different alternatives and Alternative A-2 may be a compromise for the two groups. PRD Gervais explained there is agreement on the South Field improvements but there are different opinions for the North Field. He explained Alternative A-1 is preferred by the soccer organizations and it would cover the entire site with synthetic turf and baseball would have a portable mound. The baseball organizations prefer B-1 which maintains a dirt infield and permanent mound. Alternative A-2 would include synthetic turf around the whole site with the exception of the mound and home plate. Every spring a mound would be constructed and dirt would remain at home plate during baseball season.

PRD Gervais noted the cost for this project is estimated at \$2.5 million for the North Field improvements and \$800,000 for the South Field.

Staff will continue to mediate with the youth sports groups to come up with a resolution. If that is not possible the City will move ahead with a decision. Criteria for the decision will include the need for more playable hours, flexibility for the future, and reduction in maintenance costs.

RM Brunson added the project has been on hold with the landscape architect for 3-4 months. \$75,000 was approved for the design and approximately \$41,000 has been spent to date. He stated he respects that the youth sports representatives are passionate about their sports but ultimately a decision needs to be made that is best for the community and the future.

PRD Gervais and RM Brunson responded to Commission questions.

- The City Council recently gave staff permission to negotiate with Clear Channel for an electronic signboard at the Sports Complex that could generate revenue.
- There would be slight, but not significant, cost savings by completing the fields at the same time.
- Marina Field was not included for synthetic turf as it can only be used for Little League baseball due to its size.
- Currently the North Field has one full size soccer field. The South Field usually has one Under 8 soccer field but this year, due to the construction on the school athletic fields, the soccer programs are adding an additional modified Under 8 field to the South Field.

- Depending on field demands, some use on the other fields could transfer to the Sports Complex if synthetic turf is installed.
- Fields consisting of a dirt infield and synthetic turf were installed at Hawes Park and Mitchell Field in Redwood City that provide an example of how the edge of a dirt infield and synthetic turf meet.
- A water storage cistern would be a challenge at this site as it is on top of a landfill.
- It is expected the savings in maintenance costs in 10 years would recover the costs of the project. The lifespan of the synthetic turf is expected to be 10 years but the base level is anticipated to last 20-30 years.
- There may be some more settling at the site but that will be considered in the drainage system design.
- It was clarified that U-10, U-19 means the players consist of youths under the age of 10 or under the age of 19 and that this determines the size of the playing field for soccer.
- Projected down time for construction of this project would be six to nine months.
- A construction contingency would be included and could cover costs if there are issues with settling and drainage.
- Alternative A-2 was almost agreed upon by all the groups but that fell apart.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Tom Snider, Belmont United Soccer Club, spoke in support of Concept A-2. His reasons included (1) lack of playing fields and that without two fields on the North Field they would have to turn away youth, (2) this City-owned field should be made available for use by all user groups, (3) CSM, Canada & Skyline Colleges have fields with the same concept plan as A-2, (4) athletic field space is limited and in order to accommodate all user groups synthetic turf playing fields increase playable hours and natural grass needs to rest and is not practical, (5) a vast majority of the Belmont Sports Advisory Committee support concept plan A-2. He added Concept Plan A-1 would also accommodate all user groups.

Daren Stewart, AYSO and original member of the Sports Advisory Committee, spoke in support of Concept A-2. He noted serving on this Committee has not been an easy or pleasant process as there has been a lot of debate on the Committee. The members have agreed to disagree and they are at an impasse over the large baseball diamond. This field is limited to the Colt and Babe Ruth programs due to the fixed size of the mound and bases. The Colt Program has one team with 13-15 players comprised of Belmont/Redwood Shores youth. The Babe Ruth program has approximately 90 players with 12 to 13 Belmont/Redwood Shores youth. He said in making this decision what is best for the whole community needs to be considered and to him it makes the most sense to put turf surface over the entire space except for the pitching mound and the home plate area. He added this would not be taking away a baseball field, but this would change the surface that baseball would be played on.

Jay Anthony, president of Belmont/Redwood Shores Pony/Colt Baseball and member of the Sports Advisory Committee, spoke in support of concept plan B-1. He said he sees Concept B-1 as a compromise as the plate would be moved back and the infield size would decrease to allow more space for soccer. He acknowledged that there may be more soccer players than baseball players but the site was initially built for baseball, and if the entire area was turfed baseball

would become an afterthought. He said that baseball uses that field more than any other organization in their season. He added he spoke to the coach at Carlmont High School who said that the players would be at a disadvantage if they played on synthetic turf if they want to be competitive in high school.

Steve Vega, president of Babe Ruth, spoke in support of Concept B-1 and leaving the baseball field as it currently is with a dirt and grass infield and turfing the outfield. He expressed concern with synthetic turf and an increased risk for injury due to an increase in ball speed and further slide distance. He added building a dirt mound in the home plate area can be done but that would eliminate a fall program that gives youth an opportunity to see if they are ready for the Babe Ruth program.

Saverio Ferme, Belmont United Soccer Club, noted that field space has been lost due to the construction at the school sites. He agreed with the statement of improving the quality of life and that kids have a greater opportunity for usage of the sport facilities. He spoke in support of the A-1 Concept to allow more flexibility and allow multi-uses on the surface.

Fred Krauss noted there are natural fields available for baseball at other sites. He questioned the cost difference between the Concepts. He also questioned how it has worked out for those that have installed combined fields. He noted other sports such as lacrosse, soccer and field hockey could benefit from field space in the winter. He questioned what percentage of baseball games played on other city's fields is on natural grass fields compared to synthetic turf. He also asked if there was a way that the youth organization could use the high school fields.

C Cheechov expressed concern with portable mounds and the risk of injury. She stated she preferred Concept B-1 with the more traditional grass and dirt infield.

C Bortoli stated he has served on the Sports Advisory Committee. He reviewed the history of Little League and baseball at the Sports Complex. Soccer started playing at the Sports Complex in the 1990's and that has had a major impact on the fields. From late March to early July baseball plays a minimum of 12 games a week on the North Field. Babe Ruth also uses the field in the fall season. He also expressed concern with portable mounds. He stated Concept A-2 would eliminate the fall program for baseball. He noted Babe Ruth has been a very successful program with players going on to play in high school, college and the minor leagues. One former Belmont youth plays for the St. Louis Cardinals. He said a grass and dirt infield, Concept B-1, is the best option and offers the most flexibility. He added the reasons that a couple of the colleges went to turf fields is because they have drainage and weather problems.

YC Bartee noted A-1 has mobile mounds which are not safe; A-2 has slippery turf problems and also has the dirt mounds which would be installed and removed which would remove the fall baseball programs. Concept B-1 limits the size for the soccer programs play area on the North Field. YC Bartee questioned the maintenance costs comparison for the split field, B-1 option compared to an all turf field. PRD Gervais replied that there would be a slight increase to maintain the grass for water and some staff cost but the sports organizations do to most of the field maintenance. Staff does have concerns about the interface between the artificial turf and the infield and how well that can be maintained. YC Bartee questioned what it will cost to replace

the top layer of the turf after 10 years; PRD Gervais said the estimates would be half or less than half to replace it and he would find out what the cost was for Carlmont High School.

C Wright stated she appreciates the comments and background information from Commissioner Bortoli. She stated her preference leans towards Concept B-1 option as it seems baseball loses more if the entire field is turfed.

C Wong expressed appreciation for all the comments and for the youths sports groups assistance in maintaining the field but noted there is a cost to the City to water and maintain the field. He stated he realized both groups have passionate perspectives and there were good arguments on both sides. He said if the Sports Advisory Group does not come to a consensus the Commission will make the decision. He added he was in favor of Concept B-1.

C Block stated that the Commission has heard from two groups – soccer and baseball but have not heard anything from softball and questioned if they would be in favor of synthetic turf covering the entire softball field. He noted the pros and cons with Concepts B-1 and A-2 and questioned if any modeling has been done to see how to get the best use for the community and serve the most number of youths.

CC Kevin Sullivan questioned the number of players in certain groups. Soccer representatives said in the U19 age group 200 Belmont youths participate. RM Brunson stated the number of youths participating in Babe Ruth & Pony Colt was 108 total with 26 Belmont residents.

CC Kevin Sullivan agreed with C Wong that if the Sports Advisory Committee is not able to come up with a decision the City needs to make it so this can move forward. He noted the field belongs to the City and it should do what makes the most sense. He said he would support the Option of A-2.

C Cheechov asked if there would be any field space available in Redwood Shores for a U-19 soccer field. RM Brunson explained the City of Redwood City would schedule use of the fields in Redwood Shores. Belmont/Redwood Shores youth sports have scheduled some time there but their fields would not accommodate a U19 team.

C Block questioned how many additional soccer players would be served in Concept A-2 instead of Concept B-1. RM Brunson explained that he does not have a specific number. PRD Gervais noted AYSO has 1100 kids with 80-90% Belmont/Redwood Shores residents and baseball has 26 Belmont/Redwood Shores youths.

C Eric Sullivan asked C Bortoli if this was brought back to the Sports Advisory Committee to convene if they could come up with a unified recommendation and C Bortoli said they have been at an impasse for some time and he did not think that they would.

In response to CC Kevin Sullivan's question for the next steps, PRD Gervais said the Commission has been updated on the progress, heard from the community and has given their feedback. This will be brought back to the Sport Advisory Committee and try one more time to

see if they can reach a consensus. If they do not, staff will take the Commission's feedback and bring this back to them with a recommendation.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. Commissioner Participation in the California Parks and Recreation Society's Annual Conference

PRD Gervais stated that CPRS (California Parks & Recreation Society) has their annual conference in Northern California this year. They switch the location of their conference between southern California and northern California each year. Since it is nearby staff would like to provide an opportunity for Commissioners to attend. Commissioners can sign up for the entire 3-day conference or select one day to attend. He noted that if Commissioners would like to sign up for the entire conference the early discounted registration must be completed in October.

VII. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

A. Questions and Comments

PRD Gervais reported the following:

- The City received Grant money from the County and a donation for the Senior Center Project. Improvements will include painting, replacing the carpet and furniture.
- Some work has been completed on Barrett classrooms. Demolition of interior walls will be on the City Council agenda in September.
- The first Tree Board meeting will be held on October 3rd before the Parks & Recreation Commission meeting. The meeting will start at 6:00 p.m.
- The City Council agenda will include an item on a Parks Mitigation Fee Study and look at updating that fee.
- The Crystal Springs School will be on the City Council agenda on September 11, 2012.
- In response to C Wright's request, PRD Gervais said that Barrett tours could be scheduled after 5:00 p.m.

B. Future Agenda Items

Tree Board Meeting
Davey Glen Park
Parks & Recreation Survey
Trail Safety & Open Space
Barrett Community Center
Master Plan

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Jonathan Gervais

Parks & Recreation Director